

November 17, 2008, LUARC Commission Meeting

LUARC Commission members present: Jack Fisher, Chair; Joseph V. Doria, Jr.; Marvin Reed; Robert F. Casey; Gary Passanante; Steven M. Cozza; Joseph Donahue (for State Treasurer David Rousseau). Absent: Jane Kenny.

The minutes of the October 22, 2008, meeting were approved. Joseph Donahue abstained.

The minutes of the October 31, 2008, meeting were approved. Gary Passanante abstained.

Testimony from: Assemblyman Frederick Scalera, Shaun Golden, Thomas Butts & Craig Reiner

Assemblyman Frederick Scalera: Essex County Sheriff's Office, Deputy Director of Homeland Security

A career & volunteer fireman for over 30 years. Involved in emergency management, homeland security, and hazardous material response. 911 came into Nutley in 1979. The Assemblyman indicated that he was not at the Commission meeting to testify for or against consolidation but to talk about the hurdles. He discussed the problems of regionalizing 911 in Essex County. Union County does mutual aid 911 calls. A number of counties have no regional 911 capacity. There is a multiplicity of equipment & frequencies for emergency situations & very little uniformity. New Jersey is fighting to get sufficient frequencies due to crowding out by New York City. Scalera supports the concept of regional dispatch centers but is not sure how you get municipalities to buy in.

Questions:

Robert F. Casey: Is it a matter of money or technology?

Frederick Scalera: Both

Marvin Reed: How do you organize system management?

Frederick Scalera: It is manageable if technology is put in properly.

Gary Passanante: Camden County started to look at interconnection but it has been years in the works. The towers are just beginning to be built. Frequencies, costs, & equipment are all issues.

Frederick Scalera: Should look at it like a 10 year work out plan.

Joseph Donahue: What would cost of a statewide emergency response communication system be?

Frederick Scalera: New York State spent \$2 billion on a failed system. New Jersey can do it for \$59 million with another \$30 million spent by the counties and municipalities.

Testimony from: Shaun Golden, Undersheriff, Monmouth County

Deeply involved in emergency management. The Monmouth County Sheriff backs regional dispatch. There are 48 police departments in Monmouth County, of which seven are joint dispatch. Hazlet is backing out of joint dispatch (training was mentioned as one of the reasons), leaving six doing joint dispatch. Home rule issues: budget: money is tight & it is pushing interest in regional 911 dispatch. Police chiefs are reluctant to go to regional dispatch because of fear of service collapse in emergency situations. Knowledge of home towns & their geography is another issue. A regional dispatch center is being designed in Monmouth County. Interoperability in Monmouth County is sketchy at best, but better for fire dispatching. Cost to build County regional trunk system & regional dispatch: \$22 million to \$30 million. At the municipal level there is concern that there are no funds.

Questions:

Marvin Reed: How do you pro rate costs for a county system?

Shaun Golden: Monmouth County incurs a cost of \$44.32/call. County bills municipalities \$4.32/call. It doesn't pay for the operation of the center but it offsets the budget.

Marvin Reed: Asks a question about how a call reporting a car accident in the Borough of Roosevelt is routed.

Shaun Golden: Monmouth County answers the call and turns it over to the State Police.

Marvin Reed: And if there is an injured passenger?

Shaun Golden: Roosevelt First Aid is dispatched by Monmouth County.

Gary Passanante: Is the process different if the call comes in from a cell phone?

Shaun Golden: Cell phone calls are handled by Monmouth County.

Gary Passanante: Are wireless calls becoming predominant?

Shaun Golden: Yes.

Testimony from: Thomas Butts, Gloucester County Emergency Response Center

Firefighters sought regional dispatch by Gloucester County in 1980. Gloucester County dispatches for 42 EMS organizations. Gloucester County dispatches for 24 police departments, all fire departments, & all EMS organizations.

In 1998 began to deal with police dispatch. The initial investment was funded out of county tax.

There was a three prong approach which dealt with dispatching, data management, radio tracking. Almost everyone participated in at least one of the approaches.

All 911 calls went to sheriff's office – 1 PSAP. Emergency management is also in the building.

Real success story in terms of communications. County has been picking up frequencies as they become available.

County has been working with Philadelphia UASI region - part of wireless communication loop.

Joseph V. Doria: How much resistance is there to regional dispatching?

Thomas Butts: Getting elected officials on board is easy; others are more difficult. For police in smaller towns it was an easier lift but the larger towns wanted proof that regionalization was the way to go. Current municipal dispatchers were brought into the regionalized dispatch system. One of the reasons for incorporating them into the system was for buy in and to lessen the complaints that a regionalized group would be insensitive to local geography. The dispatchers were allowed to maintain their existing salaries which also assisted with the buy in. Gloucester County has 140 dispatchers; at least 33 working at any given time; a \$13 million budget of which 60 percent is covered by insurance payments for EMS calls for 250,000 citizens. Real economies of scale have been achieved. The regional dispatch system's mapping system ignores municipal boundaries for EMT responses; ambulances go from nearest point to wherever they are needed. Municipal police dispatch has been shut down in favor of police dispatch by the Sheriff's office; the municipalities are happy with the Sheriff's police dispatch service.

Jack Fisher: Salaries were all over the place but the freeholders allowed them to come in with no interruption.

Gary Passanante: What is one penny on the property tax rate in Gloucester County?

Thomas Butts: \$1.7 million. \$13 million includes equipment too. Just under 6 minutes is response time, 90% of the time.

Marvin Reed: Costs are paid by the County. Is there a wide disparity in assessed valuations in Gloucester County?

Jack Fisher: It was an issue only at the beginning; not now.

Testimony from: Craig Reiner, Office of Information Technology; Director, Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services

Read prepared statement (see attachment A).

Questions:

Marvin Reed: Need to explore more of the needs of the “Urban 15” municipalities & bring them in later. What is the biggest problem on this issue?

Craig Reiner: State Mandate – State Pay

Joseph Donahue: Aren’t Homeland Security funds available for 911 dispatch?

Craig Reiner: Not much. Most Homeland Security funds are earmarked for the “big event.”

Steven M. Cozza: has a PSAP ever been pulled?

Craig Reiner: Yes, over equipment issues for a while.

Gary Passanante would like to know why Voorhees decided not to join Camden County dispatch.

Craig Reiner: Does not know the specific issue only what he read in the newspapers.

Jack Fisher: Would like staff to research the information.

Executive Director Hannah Shostack gave her report.

Next meeting will address consolidation issues in administration of justice (December 22).

Bob Casey would like to have Ernie Reock present at the next meeting (December 9). He would like to hear more on how to classify municipalities.

Public Discussion:

Charles Aughenbaugh, Jr., New Jersey State Fire Chiefs Association

Essex County emergency services cannot communicate & coordinate, which leads to delayed response to emergencies, such as the Seton Hall fire. Asked for some Homeland Security funds. Urged that State Aid be withheld from municipalities that will not come into REMS (regional emergency management system) regional communications system – let them fund their own independent system.

Adjournment approved unanimously.

Attachment A

Good morning Chairman Fisher and members of the Commission. My name is Craig Reiner and I am the Director of the Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services (OETS) within the Office of Information Technology (OIT). On behalf of Adel Ebeid, Chief Technology Officer and Chair of the New Jersey 9-1-1 Commission I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about consolidation issues related to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).

To begin I would like to give a quick background of the evolution of the statewide enhanced 9-1-1 system. The starting point for the statewide 9-1-1 system began with the Emergency Response Study Commission in 1986. The Emergency Response Study Commission's research showed that it was not uncommon for each county in New Jersey have between 40 and 80 emergency numbers listed for various emergency services. Out of confusion 3,500 citizens daily would dial "O" and asked the operator to be connected to an emergency agency, illustrating the need for a single number to access emergency services, regardless on the nature. Their recommendation to the Legislature led to the 9-1-1 Act in 1989 which called for the implementation of a statewide enhanced 9-1-1 system within 3 years and mandated that every municipality participate. The 9-1-1 Act also created both the 9-1-1 Commission and the Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services, originally placed within the Department of Law and Public Safety. Recognizing the telecommunications industry was evolving from the traditional fixed location of landline telephones to emerging technology such as wireless telephones, Voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephony, text messaging and Automatic Crash Notification (ACN) services such as OnStar, the 9-1-1 Commission and OETS were relocated to the Office of Information Technology in 2000.

During the time of the Emergency Response Study Commission the exact same issue that is being discussed here today was being discussed in 1986, the cost related to the number of PSAPs. Even then several concepts were explored such as, one PSAP for the entire state, one PSAP in each county, and the most costly of an estimated 235 agencies that expressed their interest in establishing a PSAP at that time.

In 1991 implementation of the statewide enhanced 9-1-1 system began and took until late 1994 to complete. Today there are 217 PSAPs in New Jersey and an additional 130 agencies that have 9-1-1 calls transferred to them for the dispatch function. The configuration of PSAPs in New Jersey range from countywide PSAPs that serve the entire county with populations over 500,000 as in Gloucester, Hunterdon Salem and Ocean County, to county PSAPs serving a large portion of the county, mostly the smaller communities, as in Bergen, Burlington, Cumberland, Camden, Somerset, Morris, Monmouth, and Passaic County, with the remaining PSAPs operated as regional PSAPs (several municipalities) or by a city or municipality, of those approximately 35 serve a population base less than 10,000.

In fiscal year 2005 the Legislature implemented the 9-1-1 System and Emergency Response Fee which consists of a \$.90 monthly assessment on each phone line, generating approximately \$120M annually to offset the State's cost related to emergency response. Of that amount \$14M was appropriated for 9-1-1 grants which was to be distributed in a manner that would create incentives for the consolidation of PSAPs, based on criteria developed by the 9-1-1 Commission, OETS, the Office of the Treasurer and DCA. To assist in the consolidation initiative OETS contracted with the Rutgers University's, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development to conduct a comprehensive study of 9-1-1 throughout the state as well as look to other states pursuing PSAP consolidation for guidance. During the course of the study it was apparent that there is no simple formula or population threshold that can be applied in determining how best to consolidate PSAPs however it was clear that there are opportunities in New Jersey where PSAP consolidation would provide a cost savings as well as improve service. The final report was published in October 2006 and I believe was provided to the Commission for consideration

Beginning in FY-05 grant criteria was established by the 9-1-1 Commission to encourage PSAP consolidation and in subsequent years the grant eligibility requirements have been incrementally increased. Some of the criteria enacted by the 9-1-1 Commission to limit the number of eligible PSAPs included the requirement that the PSAP maintain a minimum staffing of two call-taker/dispatchers around the clock; certifying that the PSAP does not use sworn personnel as dispatchers and most recently the population served by the PSAP must be at least 65,346, the population of the smallest New Jersey county (Salem).

To date the consolidation that resulted has been minimal. Over the last three years the 9-1-1 Commission has awarded grant funds to study consolidation in Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Union County, as well as Ewing, Hopewell and Lawrence Township in Mercer County, perhaps at some point some degree of consolidation will occur as a result of these studies.

In June, 2006, Senate President Codey and Assembly Speaker Roberts called for a special legislative session that would work throughout the summer and fall with the goal of enacting property tax reforms by the end of 2006. On July 28, 2006 Governor Jon S. Corzine delivered an address before the joint session of the Legislature. Following the Governor's address, the Senate and Assembly passed Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 3 that created four bipartisan joint committees to review and formulate proposals that address property tax reform.

One of the committees, named the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services, was charged with reviewing and formulating proposals that address the sharing of services and regionalization of functions at all levels of government. The committee ultimately put forth 18 recommendations to be acted upon, one of which was recommendation #12 which states: Consolidate public safety answering points consistent with State 9-1-1 Commission recommendations.

On December 4, 2006 Senate Bill 45 was introduced to implement the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services recommendations. Senate Bill 45 was signed into law by Governor Corzine on March 16, 2007, amending 9-1-1 Statute, N.J.S.A. 52:17C-3 as follows:

The State plan shall require the consolidation of PSAPs as appropriate, consistent with revisions in the plan to upgrade the enhanced 9-1-1 system and shall condition the allocation of moneys dedicated for the operation of PSAPs on the merging and sharing of PSAP functions by municipalities, counties and the State Police, consistent with the revised plan.

The Treasurer may establish, by regulation, a 9-1-1 call volume minimum that may be utilized as a factor in determining which PSAP functions are to be consolidated under the State plan.

The State plan shall limit the use of sworn law enforcement officers to provide dispatch services and the office shall condition the receipt of moneys dedicated for the operation of PSAPs on the limited use of sworn law enforcement officers, except for officers returning to active duty from an injury or other physical disability.

Up to this point the Statute governing the 9-1-1 Commission and OETS extends only to the PSAP, therefore our charge from the Legislature speaks only to the consolidation of PSAPs. It is recognized by the 9-1-1 Commission and OETS that the interrelationship of 9-1-1 and public safety dispatch must be looked at together to truly achieve cost savings as well as the potential for improved services. Recognizing the relationship between 9-1-1 and Public Safety Communications the responsibility of Public Safety Interoperable Communications is being transferred from the Department of Law and Public Safety to the Office of Information Technology as well as merging the 9-1-1 Commission and the Public Safety Interoperable Communications Coordinating Council. To illustrate the connection between 9-1-1 and Public Safety Dispatch it could be said a county that currently has 15 PSAPs could consolidate that function into a single County PSAP that transfers calls back to the local agencies for public safety dispatching, not resulting in any cost savings.

To achieve meaningful cost savings it is imperative that consolidation efforts examine 9-1-1 and public safety dispatch collectively. In the course of exploring opportunities for consolidation there are many issues that need to be considered. As mentioned earlier, there are no simple formulas that can be used, striking the right balance between a statewide PSAP, County PSAP, regional PSAP or municipal PSAP is difficult. The 9-1-1 Commission has embraced the concept of one PSAP in each county plus one PSAP in each of the cities defined as the “Urban 15” but the road to get there has not been planned.

Factors that need to be planned for while pursuing consolidation opportunities include evaluating the various radio systems used in the dispatch function; many police agencies have significant investments in Record Management Systems (RMS) that may not be compatible; personnel in many small PSAPs located in police departments perform secondary duties such as handle walk-up complaints and answer administrative telephones; in some cases dispatchers monitor video cameras on prisoners. The largest barrier to consolidation is overcoming the home rule concept that exists throughout New Jersey. Consolidation of 9-1-1 and public safety dispatch has proven to be cost effective and improved public safety in many areas throughout New Jersey. A consolidated communications center, whether managed at regional or county level must provide the funding, commitment and governance structure to meet the needs of the community and public safety professionals it serves.

As New Jersey joins the nation in the planning process for the Next Generation 9-1-1 System the time is now for municipalities and counties to work together in this consolidation effort to minimize the cost of deploying new 9-1-1 in the upcoming years.

The 9-1-1 Commission and the Office of Information Technology are available should any additional assistance be requested.

Again, thank you for this opportunity and at this time I would be willing to answer any questions the Commission may have.